MATERIAL CULTURE

Dwellings

The sides of the Yakut winter dwelling are occupied by wide wooden banks called *oron* (bank) or *olox* (seat). The northeastern corner (Fig. 19), where a door or an uncovered entrance leads to the cattle stalls and the other small corners, has no banks. The names of the banks and their uses are of considerable ethnographical interest. The entrance to the Yakut dwelling always faces east, the seat of benevolent deities. The bank directly to the left of the entrance has no name and is designed for household objects. Sometimes there is no bank at all at this point. On the plan illustrated (Fig. 19) Nos. 1 and 3 are called the right side of the dwelling, i.e., facing outward to the entrance. No. 1 is called *atax oron* (the first bank) or *ăna suol oron* (the bank by the door). Its ancient name was *kŏñŭl olox* (the free seat). This seat is for unimportant, impoverished visitors, and serves as a sleeping place for male laborers. In the Kolyma District, during the marriage feast, the bridegroom sits in this place with his back to the banqueting guests.

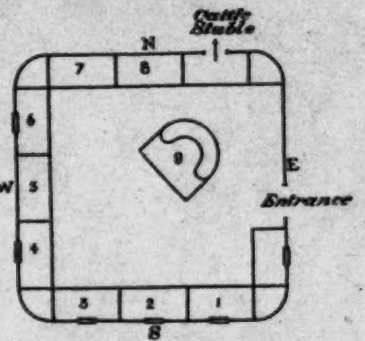

Fig. 19. Groundplan of a Yakut Hut, showing the Position of the Banks, Windows, and Entrance.

No. 2 is called *ortuku uña oron* (the right middle bank), *tŭnnŭxtax oron* (bank near the window), or *orto olox* (the middle seat). The last is the most ancient name. The designation for No. 2 is the same as for No. 1. When a son-in-law visits his bride in the house of her parents before the *kalym* (bride-price) has been paid, No. 2 is assigned to the couple as a sleeping place.

No. 3 is called *billirik*. It is regarded as the best, most comfortable, and warmest seat and sleeping place in the Yakut hut. Usually there is no window over this bank, although in the sketch a window is shown. The most honored guests or the shaman invited for a performance is seated there. During a wedding the parents of the bridegroom, relatives, and the matchmakers, and other members of the wedding party have this place. The *billirik* is also known under the following names: *tŭs-pediyĕr olox*, *ulŭtuyar olox*, or *tŭs olox*.

No. 4 is called *bastyñ uña oron* (the right first bank). According to Sieroszevski this position carries less honor than the *billirik;* it is less

2: Jochelson E-5 (1884-1902) 1933 Yakut

comfortable, has a window above it, and is within the range of the cold wind from the open entrance door. During a wedding it is occupied by the owners of the house and their nearest relatives; here also are seated honored guests when the *billirik* is already occupied. The *billirik* and the *bastyñ uña oron* form the "venerable corner." There a table stands, over which, under the ceiling, is a small carved and decorated shelf, called *holloruk*, on which are icons and images of saints painted on boards, to which wax candles, decorated with ribbons, beads, and other pendants, are affixed; or an embellished oil lamp is hung in front of the images. There on Sundays and holidays, headed by the hosts, the inmates and guests gather for prayer, so that this corner is transformed into a kind of chapel. During the prayers, the people stand in front or at the rear of the group, in accordance with their age and position in the community. They bow, cross themselves, hold lighted candles, and burn incense. In Fig. 20 may be seen a brass picture of saints fastened to a board surmounted by crosses. The ancient name of the *bastyñ uña oron* was *kōhūl olox*.

No. 5, the bank opposite the fireplace (No. 9) called *kātāharin*, is the family sleeping place above which there is no window.

No. 6, *kānčiārā olox*, is also called *xañas billirik* (left *billirik*) where adult girls (daughters and relatives) sit, work, and sleep. *Kānčiāra-jon* means young people in general.

No. 7 is called *xañas oron*. It serves as a sleeping place for female laborers or servants and grown children of both sexes. On this bank, hidden by a curtain, the bride sits during the three days' wedding festivities.

No. 8 is called *isit oron* (bank for cooking and other household vessels, from *isit*, kitchen ware).

Over Nos. 7 and 8 is usually a shelf called *dolbūr*.

All the banks beyond the *kātāhārīn* are regarded as belonging to the women of the dwelling. When facing the entrance, inside, the male half of the house is to the right and the female half to the left. The *kātāhārīn* (No. 5) or the family sleeping place and all the banks of the female half are supplied with calico (in former times, leather) curtains which are let down during the night.

From the Russians the Yakut adopted the use of tables and tabourets. Illustrations of models of such furniture may be seen in Fig. 21. The table is usually much lower than our tables and the tabouret is as high as the table. The table with refreshments on it is placed before guests sitting on the banks (*oron*) described above. The Yakut name for

[cf. p. 136, Category 116 -- ANALYST]

2: Jochelson E-5 (1884-1902) 1933 Yakut

a table, *ostuol*, shows its origin from the Russian word for table, *stol*. In ancient times, the Yakut used tables without legs, or boards, which were called *sandaly*. These were placed on the floor before the visitors or on the bank between them.

The fireplace (*osox*, or *kömülüök*, from the Russian, *kamelek*, No. 9) is situated in the northeastern corner of the dwelling; its front part faces the dividing line between the male and female halves of the house. The hearth, quadratic in form, consists of a wooden trough made of logs or heavy boards, and lined with beaten clay. The length of the sides of the trough is about 5 feet and the height about 11 inches. The chimney, open in front and sloping backward somewhat, consists of poles, tied with twigs at the top, over the roof, and coated inside with clay. The mistress of the house is the chief guardian of the hearth which is the family protector. She alone is privileged to pass in front of it; all the other women must go around back of it. If the master of the house or an honorary guest stands in front of the hearth, the mistress too must pass behind it. During her menstrual period a woman is not allowed to touch the fire or to approach the hearth. A woman lying-in and her midwife may not enter the part of the house lighted by the flame of the hearth. A bride entering the house of her husband must throw a few little sticks into the fire and make a libation of melted butter. After these, she becomes a member of the family. It seems that the throwing of little sticks is symbolic of making fire, the task of a woman member of the family. A photograph of the Yakut hearth (Fig. 52) may be seen in the chapter on pottery.

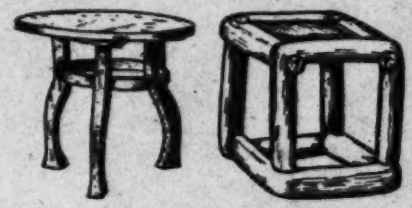

Fig. 21 (70-9284, 9281). Model of a Table and a Chair.

Fig. 22 shows the exterior of the Yakut earth hut. When built separately from the earth hut for cattle, it has the form of a truncated pyramid, but in the illustration the two structures are combined. The cattle stable has an exit door to the yard, but there is also an inside door leading from the dwelling to the cattle stable (Fig. 19). The Russians call the Yakut earth hut, *yourta*, a name given to all types of native dwellings whether tents or permanent huts. The Yakut themselves call their earth hut, *balahan*, a name used also by the Mongoloid peoples of Siberia. There is a winter earth hut (*kystyk balahan*) and a summer earth hut (*sayylyk balahan*) which do not differ. The summer hut is

6: Sauer--127 G-5 (1785-94) 1802 Yakut
116, 585, 756, 583

"The ceremony of buying a wife is extremely formal and tedious. A young man who wishes to marry sends his friend to ask the consent of the bride's father, and what kalym (purchase) he demands; that is, how many horses and cattle, as also the quantity of raw meat, horse flesh, and beef, that he requires for treats and feasts: this they call kurim; half of the quantity is always given in presents to the bridegroom by the bride's father, and is called yrdy. The daughter's inclinations are always consulted; and, if she does not object, the kalym and kurim are stipulated."

6: Sauer--127-128 G-5 (1785-94) 1802 Yakut
116, 585, 756

"The bridegroom kills two fat mares, dresses the heads whole, and the flesh in pieces, and goes with three or four friends to the father of the bride. On his arrival at the hut, one of his friends enters and places one of the dressed horses' heads before the fire, and returns to his companions without speaking a word. They then all enter the hut, and, a sorcerer being placed opposite the fire, the bridegroom kneels on one knee with his face towards it, into which butter is thrown; he then lifts up his cap a little, and nods his head three times without bowing his body. The sorcerer pronounces him the happy man, and prophesies a succession of happy years, &c. Then the bridegroom rises, bows to the father and mother, and takes his seat opposite the bride's place, but keeps silent. The meat is then brought in, and the father of the bride distributes it among his own friends, but kills a fat mare to treat his new guests. Supper being over, the bridegroom goes to bed; the bride, who has not been present, is conducted into the hut and to his bed by some old woman, and they sleep together; sometimes, however, the bride does not appear at the first visit. In the morning, the friends return home; [128] but the bridegroom remains three or four days. A time is now fixed for the payment of the kalym, either at the new or full moon."

6: Sauer--128-129 G-5 (1785-94) 1802 Yakut-1-2
116, 585, 591

"The kalym and kurim [RCH: purchase and bride-price] are then carried, without any ceremony, and delivered in the presence of many friends, who are feasted, and the bridegroom remains again three or four days, and fixes a time to receive the bride at his own dwelling, which must be new built on purpose, and this also at the new or full moon. All her relations, male and female, with friends and neighbours, sometimes more than a hundred, accompany the bride with her father and mother, taking with them eight or ten symirs full of melted butter, and the dressed meat of three fat mares. They go to the new hut prepared for them; three men are sent to the bridegroom in his old hut, and the greatest drinkers are chosen for this purpose. On entering, the first says, 'We are come to see your dwelling, and to fix posts before your door.' They then kneel on one knee before the fire. An ayach (1) is filled with koumis, and handed

1. An urn-shaped wooden vessel with three legs, which contains from two to four gallons.

by two men to the three kneeling, each of whom empties an ayach at three draughts. They then rise and go out, all the company saluting them with one cheer. Three others enter; the first with nine sables, the second with nine foxes, and the third with 27 ermine skins: these they hang on a peg in the chief corner of the hut, and retire.

6: Sauer--128-129 G-5 (1785-94) 1802 Yakut-2
116, 585, 591

Then a number of women conduct the bride, her face being covered with ermine skins, to the hut; the entrance has a wooden bar placed across it, but of no strength, which the bride breaks with her breast, and enters the hut. She is placed before the fire, holding her hands open before her, into which seven pieces of sticks are put; as also several pieces of butter, which she throws into the fire. The shaman pronounces a blessing; she then rises, and is again con-[129]ducted, with her face concealed all the while, to the new hut, where the cover is taken from her face. The bridegroom enters, and feasts his guests two days; then presents all his relations with cattle, over and above the kalim; which is, however, returned, on paying their formal visits, perhaps a year or more afterwards."

7: Shklovsky -- 50 T-3 (1891-92) 1916 Yakut
116, 538, 585, 776

"Although the Yakuts had been 'Christianised' a hundred years previously, paganism remained in full strength and to the numerous gods of their pantheon they added Christian saints. Probably there was no marriage ceremony in former times, for though Yakutian legends are extraordinarily rich in detail, the marriages of heroes are only very briefly described.

'The hero enters the hut, sees the beauty seated there, seizes her without delay, bends her like a twig, smells (kisses) her, they cohabited.' This constituted the ancient marriage rite, and the present one is not much in itself, the chief ceremonies being centered round the escorting of the bride to her new home."

7: Shklovsky -- 50-51 T-3 (1891-92) 1916 Yakut
116, 585

"The matchmakers go with the bridegroom to the parents of the bride, but all particulars, as to the [51] dowry, etc., have previously been settled. When the cavalcade arrives at the hut, the matchmakers enter, leaving the bridegroom outside. The mother, elder sisters, and other relatives of the bride come out to meet them, bearing bowls of koumiss and birch-bark jars filled with cream.

'We know, of course that you may not be hungry, having doubtless brought with you plenty of provision for the way, but, knowing that you were coming, we could not permit anyone else to touch these bowls. We have brought you of our best. Our mares were tended by seven chaste youths, and were milked by seven pure maidens.' So speaks the mother."

7: Shklovsky -- 51 T-3 (1891-92) 1916 Yakut
116, 562, 585

"The matchmakers accept the proffered refreshment, and then, still standing, repeat the terms of the marriage contract, and when the conditions are agreed to, the bridegroom enters. Often he is only a boy of thirteen. He takes off his belt, in which are his knife, pipe, flint and steel, and offers it to the bride, who is sitting near the fireplace. If she does not like the bridegroom she refuses to take the belt, whereupon all the company depart. Among the Yakuts, and generally among all the polar savages, the condition of women is much better than among the Russian peasantry. But the bride consents, and the marriage ceremony is ended."

7: Shklovsky -- 51-52 T-3 (1891-92) 1916 Yakut
116, 585, 591

"Dinner is offered to the guests, after which the bride and bridegroom are put to bed in the same hut. Etiquette requires that the husband should return next day to his home, subsequently visiting his wife in secret.

The same procedure had taken place five years [52] ago at the wedding of Moksogol's son. He had now concluded the payments of the bride's purchase-money, and, having saddled his best horse, set out upon his journey."

7: Shklovsky -- 52-53 T-3 (1891-92) 1916 Yakut
116, 585

"They are coming! They are coming!" cried merry voices outside. And, indeed, the trampling of horses' hoofs could be heard and everybody ran out. A horseman, with a young woman seated astride on the horse before him, approached the picketing-post. Itinach (the bridegroom) had happened to pass by the lake near which was his bride's home. She came out of the hut as if by chance, to draw water in her birchbark pail. Itinach shouted, picked up the girl, seated her in front of him, and set off at a gallop. The father and brother of the bride were in the hut, expecting this shout. They quickly ran out, rushed excitedly about in alarm, then they sprang on their bare-backed horses and galloped in pursuit for about five minutes, until they reached the marshes, when the pursuers stopped, quietly turned their horses, and in half an hour's time all arrived at Moksogol's hut to share the feast. Two girls, about twelve years old, came out to meet the young couple, and holding the bridle assisted Kitchipyr (the bride) to get down. From the tying-place to the door of the new hut newly-cut grass was laid down. On this grass Kitchipyr walked, curtseying every few steps, as etiquette requires. The doors of the hut were wide open, but the entrance was barred by two thin dry rods held by two girls. Kitchipyr, entering, broke these two rods against her breast, then picking up the pieces, lit them on the hearth. This ceremony [53] was to show that the Spirit of Fire now had another priestess."

7: Shklovsky -- 53 - 54 T-3 (1891-92)1916 Yakut
116, 585, 776, 782, 844

"As soon as the fire blazed on the hearth, they seated Kitchipyr [RCH: the bride of a wedding attended by the author] on the seat by the wall and hung a curtain of suède before her. On the threshold of the hut a young colt was killed, and the blood which spouted from the jugular vein was placed in a cauldron. The Shaman, taking some in a small bowl, poured it out on the ground at the door in order that the terrible god, Oulooss-Hannak-Tayon, his wife Han-Hatine, also the Lord of all Evil Spirits, Arsine-Dolai, who 'has a mouth at the back of his head and eyes in his temples,' might not bring harm into the dwelling. Another small bowl of blood the Shaman poured into the fire, a similar libation to the 'Spirit of the Hut', the little old woman, Nyaha Haraksine, who 'lives under the pole which supports the roof of the hut'; and also to the 'Patroness and Mother Saviour and Compassionate Lady Aisit-Hatine'. This kind goddess is the patroness of the Yakuts in general and of the women in particular. It is she who arranges the marriages, decides the fate of the pair, and helps [54] women in child-birth. According to the endless fairy-tale, 'Khan Jargistai,' which contains all Yakutian cosmogony, this goddess came to the first woman in her travail, remained with her three days, then left her, declaring that henceforth, so long as the Yakuts should exist, every woman three days after child-birth should rise, wash herself, and feed the cattle."

7: Shklovsky -- 54 T-3 (1891-92) 1916 Yakut
116, 585; 782

"During this offering to the Penates, [RCH: at the wedding ceremony attended by the author] the hut was encircled by an enormous leather strap, to which were fastened all the cattle belonging to the young couple. The Shaman put on the sacrificial robe, came out of the hut and stood in the centre of the living ring. To all the evil gods the Shaman poured out a libation of koumiss; to the beneficent gods there was no libation, as they were well disposed without propitiation."

7: Shklovsky -- 54 -55 T-3 (1891-92) 1916 Yakut
116, 585, 261

"' All were gathered together. They killed many cattle. They ate and drank for three days and nights. They made merry. They hiccoughed because of the heavy food. The hungry were filled. The lean were fattened. '

Tradition thus describes a marriage feast of former times. Much the same thing happened on this occasion. In twenty-four hours so enormous a [55] quantity of food was consumed -- mare's flesh, raw mare's fat, cream, frozen clotted cream, etc., that the weight of each Yakut must have increased by several pounds. One course followed another in rapid succession, while good wishes to the young people were continually uttered.

'May your teeth ever be stuck in bone-marrow! '

'May your throat be washed with the best koumiss! '

'May your mouth be rinsed with melted butter! '

'May your table never lack sweet fat from the neck of the mare! '

These delicacies were to be the portion of the hosts if the wishes of the guests should have effect."

7: Shklovsky -- 58[2] T-3 (1891-92) 1916 Yakut

116, 556, 585

"The wedding feast lasted for three days. Such feasts cost a Yakut half his fortune, but he would be considered disgracefully mean were he not to provide it."

9: Stadling--95-96 E-3 (1898) 1901 Yakut -1-2
116, 585

"The wedding, which is attended by many guests, both invited and uninvited, takes place both in the home of the bride and that of the bridegroom; the relatives and friends of the bride congregating at her home, and those of the bridegroom at his. The bride and bridegroom do not sit at the table, but in a corner behind the door, with their faces turned towards the wall, the bride on the women's side, and the bridegroom on the men's side of the yurta. Both are dressed in their best clothes. Thus they sit for three days, i.e., as long as the festival continues, without looking at one another. The young people, both girls and boys, are all the time singing, dancing, and playing. Prominent guests and old men sit on the nares along the wall, smoking and drinking tea, kumiss, and vodka. Food is eaten every now and then all the time, but the principal festival-meals are the dinner and supper. In front of each guest, on a horse-hide which serves as table-cloth, is placed a large piece of boiled meat with the bones attached. The relatives of the young couple exchange these pieces of meat, and this performance is the principal part of the Yakut marriage ceremony, symbolising the union between the families, which henceforth are to forget all enmity, and for the future be 'flesh of one flesh and bone of one bone.' Formerly, when the custom of 'robbing the bride' still continued, this ceremony consisted in the exchange of gifts as a token of reconciliation and as compensation [96] for losses sustained during mutual feuds. When the wedding is over and the guests are ready to leave, the following ceremony takes place. Holding a goblet of kumiss in their hands, the guests are conducted by the host and hostess three times around the

9: Stadling--95-96 E-3 (1898) 1901 Yakut-2
116, 585.

konovjasi--poles standing outside the yurta, to which horses are tied, and which are considered sacred. Then the guests mount their horses, drink part of the kumiss, and pour the rest on the manes of their steeds."

11: Lansdell--301 [2] M-3 (1879) 1882 Yakut
116, 261, 585

"With regard to their food, the Yakutes, if they have their choice, love to eat horse-flesh; and their adage says that to eat much meat, and grow fat upon it, is the highest destiny of man. They are the greatest gluttons. So far back as the days of Strahlenberg, it was said that four Yakutes would eat a horse. They rarely kill their oxen for food; and at a wedding, the favourite dish served up by the bride to her future lord is a boiled horse's head, with horse-flesh sausages. When, however, horse-flesh or beef is wanting, they are not at all nice as to what they consume, for they eat the animals they take for fur, and woe to the unfortunate horse that becomes seriously injured in travel! It is killed and eaten then and there, the men taking off their girdles to give fair play to their stomachs, which swell after the fashion of a boa-constrictor. Thus earnestly do they aspire to their notion of the highest destiny of man!"

12: Galitzin -- 148 N-2 (no date) 1853 Yakut
116, 261, 273, 583, 585

"Marriage is performed without any kind of ceremony. When a Yacoute wishes to obtain the hand of a girl, he must agree with the father respecting the price to be paid for her: this purchase money is called the kolim. The wedding, and the banquet which accompanies it, take place in the house of the father-in-law of the bridegroom, but at the expense of the latter. The rejoicings are prolonged twice twenty-four hours. During the kourourne (banquet) they drink a quantity of koumise, a kind of fermented beverage made with mares' milk; more rarely brandy distilled from corn, which is scarce and consequently expensive. They eat horse-flesh, beef, and moles, as dishes of the first course. As a second course, they serve on the table a dish filled with drippings. This is considered the most refined dainty. The khamiak, which is a large spoon, goes all round, and each guest drinks plentifully of the nectar. There are some gluttons among them, who, after having crammed their stomach with meat, are still capable of swallowing a hundred spoonfuls of melted fat. The bridegroom cannot take away his bride until the kolim has been wholly paid for; otherwise she continues to live with her father. Sometimes the debt is only discharged by instalments, paid at long intervals, and at each of these instalments the husband comes to spend a few days with his wife.

19: Kharuzin --40-41 E-4 (no date) 1898 Yakut
116, 554, 585, 614, 627, 796

The oldest kinsman in the clan, or the īye-ūsa, is always heaped with honors, if he is both rich and has never been put on trial. To him pertains the jurisdiction in trifling quarrels between kinsfolk. The following ceremonies serve to recall the religious functions that he (Ysekh) formerly exercised a. At the time of the spring festival, which bears a strictly clan character, they bring to him, first of all, a large wooden vessel (Choron) containing kumiss; he pronounces a prayer of thanks to the gods and then pours the kumiss upon the fire. b. At the time of the arrival of the betrothed at the bridegroom's yurt, they take from the sleigh of the betrothed, and place upon a table in front of the fire place the boiled head of a horse, whose eyes are covered with butter, to whose ears are attached intestines filled with horse's blood, and a wooden cup filled with butter. After this the betrothed enters the yurt, and stands, having first untied her girdle, on the right side of the komelok [RCH: i. e., the fireplace] where she is met by the oldest kinsman, whose place is sometimes taken nowadays by the most honored guest, who, kneeling, throws into the fire [41] pieces of meat, blood and butter, and blesses the bride. For the completion of this ceremony, whose obvious object is to unite the bride with the bridegroom's home, the oldest kinsman secures for his use the head, blood and butter brought into the yurt, and in addition the sum of one ruble.

19: Kharuzin -- 52-53 E-4 (no date) 1898 Yakut-1-2
116, 177, 584, 585

The authority of the parental power is so strong, that despite the fact that marriages are entered upon against the will of the parties involved, cases of secret marriage without the agreement and knowledge of the parents, or the persons acting in their place if the parties involved are orphans, are not encountered among the Yakuts, according to the investigator (Pripuzov). But the influence of Christianity has made itself felt in the fact that if the principals in the marriage are opposed to the arrangement, they can so declare [53] at the wedding ceremony, which is sometimes held considerably later than the Yakut nuptials, (1) which are sometimes held before the couple have come of age,

1. Mr. Pripuzov supplies us with little information concerning wedding rites. The parents of the young couple play the leading role during the wedding. If the young couple are orphans, without mother or father, the place of the parents is taken by the chief. The young couple are supposed to treat him with the respect accorded parents during the wedding. According to Mr. Pripuzov, there are no special rites connected with match-making, with the visit of the bridegroom to the bride, and with the rukobitye (literally: hand-shake signifying the conclusion of agreement). In connection with the arrival of the bride to the house of the bridegroom the following is observed: the wedding procession has to come to the bridegroom's yourta early in the

morning, at sunrise. If the bride comes from a rich family, she rides on a light colored horse. A silver coin is attached to the halter of the horse. The bride gives this coin to one of the young men at the hitching post who seizes the horse's bridle and helps the bride to descend. The father-in-law comes out with an icon and, while the first match-maker holds the icon, he blesses the bride. Afterwards, the bride enters the yourta and there the ceremony of bringing offerings to the hearth is performed by the oldest member of the family. The bridegroom acquires the right to take his bride to his house only after he has paid the kalym, the price of which depends on previous agreement and the wealth of his parents.

if the bride price has been paid in full. In general, the payment of the bride price gives the bridegroom the right to the bride; therefore in the event of a refusal to wed on the part of the bridegroom, after the payment of the whole or a part of the bride price, the bridegroom or his parents do not have the right to demand the return of the expended money; on the other hand, if the refusal comes from the bride, her parents must make up all outlays on the part of the bridegroom.

19: Kharuzin -- 63 E-4 (no date) 1898 Yakut
116, 431, 585

The making of gifts is practiced chiefly in connection with weddings. The presents given to the young couple become part of their personal property, and continues to be theirs after the separation of the bridegroom from the parental family. These presents are usually made one year after the wedding, at the time of the visit paid to the relatives of the bride, who received presents at the time of the wedding. The couple take with them vodka and various articles of hospitality. Convention dictates that the present made to the couple should exceed the one obtained at the wedding. The reciprocal giving of presents has at present become so much a part of custom that, according to Mr. Pripuzov, if someone should obtain a present, and does not give a present in return, the present should be returned.

20: Czaplicka--116-117 E-3 (1915-16) 1916 Yakut-1-2
116, 533, 535, 585

"This dance[RCH: i.e., the dance performed at Yakut weddings] is called by the Tungus ikandzyedzyem ('I sing'), in reference to the monotonous chanting which accompanies it. A large circle is formed of men and women, not necessarily in alternation, or sometimes men and women from separate circles. Each puts the right arm under a neighbour's left, the arms being bent so that the clasped hands are brought close together in front of the body. Then all together, keeping time to the refrain,[117] move the left foot sideways in a short step, at the same time throwing the upper part of the body slightly forward. The right foot is then brought behind the left, this movement being accompanied by a slight backward jerk of the body. The double movement of the feet, left first, then right, carries the whole circle round from right to left, clockwise, and an alternate left and right swing of the hips accompanies the forward and backward movement of the body. This circling goes forward for hours, some of the dancers occasionally dropping out, while others take their places.

There is always a leader who chants a sort of recitative with words of his own (or borrowed from some well-known expert in the dance), and the refrain is taken up energetically by all the dancers in chorus--

Haiko--haikan!
Oho--gaikan!

20: Czaplicka--116-117 E-3 (1915-16) 1916 Yakut-2
116, 533, 535, 585

Handikadzyem!
Yahore, yahore,
Yahore, y-a-a-a!

All the words of this refrain are meaningless, with the exception of handikadzyem, 'I am going faster,' an exhortation to quicken the tempo."

20: Czaplicka--117-118 E-3 (1915-16) 1916 Yakut
116, 526, 585

"Another favourite diversion at weddings is [118] maasyuk, a game which bears a striking resemblance to Association football. It is played usually on the ice of a lake. Two poles are set up at each end of a space about fifty yards square. These are the goals. The object of the game is for one side to kick a ball, made of reindeer skin tied up with thongs into a round bundle, through the goal of the opposing side. The ball is kicked about, passed, butted with the head, propelled by almost any means short of manslaughter--'fouling' is not penalised, and if a kick is impossible, the ball may be picked up and thrown--towards a goal. The only player who has a fixed position is the man in goal. They do not play with fewer than ten men in a team. Sides are picked usually according to locality--men from L. Chirinda versus men from L. Nyekongda, for example. When the game is played on the occasion of a wedding, the bridegroom is expected to show great prowess."

44: Gilder --333-334 J-2 (1882) 1883 Yakut
116, 115, 585

"Two stations further on [RCH: between the Aldan River and Yakutsk] I met a newly married Yakout bride and groom, and from my companion, Mr. Bobookoff, who speaks the Yakout language well, I learned the marriage rites of those people. A young man buys a wife from her father for from fifty to five hundred rubles, varying according to her beauty and accomplishments and the earnestness or wealth of the swain. After the purchase the father of the affianced bride again takes possession of her and the lover is not allowed even to see her for a year. [334] After that interval they are married by a priest and again subjected to an agonizing separation of twenty days, at the termination of which they can fly to each other's arms and none can put them asunder. What devotion must animate their bosoms to outlive such cruel parting without one sly glance to replenish the fires of love! No communication whatever, not even a valentine, may pass between them, for I never saw but one Yakout who could read or write."

over land), thereby sustaining the fiction of community of clan interests. 565
A poor kinsman used to call a toyon who had robbed him of his posses- 614
sions aga (father), and was expected to look upon him as his "benefactor."

Family Customs

The primary unit in the social structure of the Yakuts had long been 594
the family (kergen or yal), which consisted of husband, wife and children, sometimes with the inclusion of other relatives living in the same house. The married sons were usually regarded as a separate household. The [595]
family was monogamous, but not too long ago (at the beginning of the 19th century) polygamy also existed among the wealthier section of the population, although the number of wives did not usually exceed two or three. In such cases the wives lived apart, each one running a separate household; the Yakuts explained this custom as a convenient way of looking after the livestock, which were distributed among several wives.

Marriage was preceded, sometimes for a long interval, by matchmaking. 584
There were also traces of exogamy (known from the 17th-century docu- [582]
ments); until quite late, males tried to pick their wives from a different clan, while the richer people, not satisfied with this, sought their brides as far as possible in other naslegs or even other ulusy. Having selected the bride, the groom or his parents sent their relatives as matchmakers. The latter, using special ceremonies and conventional language, sought to obtain the consent of the future bride's parents to the marriage, and on the extent of the bride-price (khalyym, or suluu). The consent of the girl herself was not asked at all in the old days. The bride-price 583
consisted of livestock, but the extent of it varied considerably, from one or two to many dozen head; the bride-price always included the meat of a slaughtered beast. At the end of the 19th century there was a strong trend towards taking the bride payment in actual money. Some of the payment (kurum) was spent on the wedding feast (in the 17th-century documents, the word kurum sometimes meant the bride payment as a whole). The payment was considered compulsory, and a girl who married without it considered herself dishonored. The suitor was assisted by relatives, 584
sometimes even by distant kinsmen, in arranging the payment, thus showing the ancient view of a wedding as an all-clan affair. The relatives of the bride also took part in distributing the payment obtained. On his side, the suitor received a dowry (enn'e), partly in livestock and meat, but more often in clothing and utensils; the value of the dowry averaged half the value of the bride-price.

The clan also played an important part in the actual wedding ceremony, 585
which was attended by a large number of guests, relatives of the bride and groom, neighbors and so on. The festivities lasted several days and consisted of extensive feasting, different rituals and amusements, games, dancing, and so on. Not only did the bride and groom refrain from occupying the central place in all this festivity, they hardly took part at all.

In similar fashion to the wedding ceremony, the kinship terminology 601
has also retained traces of the earlier forms of marriage. The name for the son—uol—actually means boy or youth; the word for daughter—kyys—means girl or little girl; father is *aŋa* (literally, "older"); wife is oyokh, but in some places the wife is simply called d'akhtar (woman), emeekhsin ("old woman") and so on; the husband is er, the older brother is ubay (bii), the younger brother is ini; the elder sister is ed'iy (agas) and the younger sister is balys. The last four terms are also used to denote uncles and aunts, nephews and nieces, and other relatives. Generally speaking,